

WASHINGTON - Supporters of a bill that would force new security and safety measures on cruise ships operating in U.S. ports scored a major victory today when the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation Committee passed the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009, and recommended it to the full House for approval.

The bill would require ships adopt security measures such as latches and peep holes for guest rooms, video surveillance to document criminal activity, as well as be equipped to provide emergency assistance to victims of sexual assaults. The bill would also require serious on board crimes be reported to the proper authorities.

U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, a member of the Transportation Committee, applauded the bill's passage, "This is important legislation that will significantly improve the safety and security of cruise passengers. It will bring many of the same, common sense security measures to cruise ships that a lot of us take for granted in major hotels."

Mitchell congratulated Ken Carver of Phoenix for pushing for this legislation. In 2004, Carver's daughter, Merrian mysteriously and tragically disappeared from an Alaskan cruise. The ship's staff did not report her absence, but instead packed her belongings, cleaned her cabin and did nothing for five weeks. A missing-persons report was not filed with the FBI until after a private detective began pressing for answers. [Source: [Arizona Republic](#), July 15, 2009]

Following his daughter's disappearance, Carver established the International Cruise Victims Association, Inc. (ICV), a non-profit corporation representing victims and families of victims of cruise crimes. ICV began pressing for legislation to require ships to adopt enhanced security measures and report on board crimes to appropriate authorities. [Source: [Arizona Republic](#), July 15, 2009]

Earlier this month, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee approved S. 588, a similar version of the bill. Today, the House Transportation Committee passed its own version, the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009.

"The passage by the House Transportation Committee of the Cruise Vessel Security and

Mitchell Applauds Committee Approval of Cruise Safety Bill

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Safety Act of 2009 is a historic step in starting to improve the safety for all passengers on Cruise ships," Carver said. "The support of Rep Harry Mitchell has been most helpful and appreciated by myself and all other victims of crimes on Cruise Ships."

Having earned committee approval in both chambers of Congress, the bill must now be approved by the full House and full Senate.